

Campaign to repeal Massachusetts gun law clears signature threshold for 2026 election

Massachusetts voters are in line to face a question during the 2026 elections asking them to repeal a new gun law.

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Massachusetts voters are in line to face a question during the 2026 election asking them to repeal a new gun law heralded by Beacon Hill Democrats after Second Amendment advocates reported collecting more than 90,000 signatures over the past month.

The milestone achieved by [a coalition of gun groups](#) sets up a contentious and lengthy campaign where opponents of the law are likely to argue the measure is an overreach of governmental powers and an infringement on Constitutional rights while supporters will contend it saves lives and creates safer communities.

Toby Leary, owner of Cape Gun Works and head of The Civil Rights Coalition, said the campaign to repeal the law

is “the largest grassroots operation I’ve seen in my lifetime.”

The coalition has raised over \$100,000, he said, and received its largest donation from Smith & Wesson, a gun company that [left Massachusetts last year](#) in response to efforts to restrict which weapons it could manufacture.

“We got a lot of work ahead of us. We got legal action that will be coming, and we got a long way to go. I believe this will be a two-year civics lesson for the people of Massachusetts when they see what their politicians have done, and it’s our turn to remind them you need to comply with your oath of office,” Leary told reporters outside the State House Tuesday afternoon.

Opponents of the law have until Wednesday to submit signatures to local election officials to place a referendum on the ballot in 2026.

The 90,078 signatures Leary and other Second Amendment groups collected is well over the 37,287 threshold needed to advance the question, though they still need to be certified by Secretary of State William Galvin’s Office.

It also would have been enough to immediately suspend the law for the next two years if [Gov. Maura Healey had not signed emergency language earlier this month](#) that put the statute into effect immediately instead of later in October.

In a letter sent to Galvin more than two months after she originally signed the measure, Healey said “strong gun laws save lives.”

“This law is the state’s most significant gun safety legislation in a decade. It will make Massachusetts safer as soon as it goes into effect, including by keeping assault-style weapons that are a danger to our communities off our streets, and by keeping guns out of government buildings and courts.”

At an event last week, Healey said she decided to approve the emergency language months after she approved the bill because “this is when we were able to process it and look through it, review the legislation.”

A spokesperson for Healey declined to comment Tuesday and referred the Herald to the governor’s previous remarks on the matter.

Leary said Healey’s decision to declare the law an emergency and upend the effort to suspend it was “purely political” and the coalition he leads is considering legal action.

“We don’t want to tip our hand exactly as to what we’re doing but yes, we are exploring all our options. I do believe that the governor acted outside of the (state) constitutional provision,” he told reporters. “The way in which it was done for purely political purposes to suppress a right, I believe, the courts would look very disfavoured on.”

The statute that mostly took effect last week is expansive and [already faces multiple legal challenges](#) at the federal level from a local affiliate of the National Rifle Association and the owner of a gun shop in Bellingham.

Its implementation also comes as Massachusetts continues to see fatal shootings, including one in [Worcester last week](#) in which I-90 was closed after an armed man killed a person at a home and then turned a gun on himself while on the highway.

A man was also killed and three others injured after a [Monday night shooting in Roxbury](#), according to police.

It is incidents like those that make clear the need for additional reforms on top of an “already strong baseline of legislation to keep us safe from gun violence,” said Ruth Zakarin, the CEO of the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence.

The law bans people under 21 from owning semiautomatic rifles or shotguns, outlaws untraceable firearms known as “ghost guns,” expands who can petition the court for an extreme risk protection order, bars carrying weapons in certain places, and sets up a group to study funding for community violence intervention programs.

Lawmakers [also worked in](#) a range of new training and licensing requirements like the need for live fire training, though the Legislature took steps last month to delay some of their implementation dates after acknowledging drafting mistakes.

Zakarin said if the law is repealed, officials will have a harder time keeping “more people safe from gun violence.”

“It’s going to be a job to balance the Constitutional rights along with the right to safety. But we don’t feel that there’s anything in this that’s an overreach. We feel like this is a very reasonable and measured approach to really thinking about access to guns and the proliferation of guns in our communities,” Zakarin told the Herald Tuesday morning.

But gun groups have said the law makes it harder for gun shop owners to stay in business, potentially incriminates everyday citizens who own firearms, and makes the licensing process unduly complicated.

Leary said the campaign to repeal the statute will use the next two years to “alert people that, ‘hey, your rights have been violated.’”

“After last Wednesday, when Maura Healey signed this into law, she immediately made people wake up on Thursday morning and be felons in the eyes of the state,” he said. “That is antithetical to the American way, that is antithetical to the Constitution. No one should ever wake up having done nothing wrong after jumping through all the hoops to be a lawful, peaceful gun owner in Massachusetts.”

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